

Peacebuilding in Lebanon Using a “Serious” Game Intervention

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Abstract:

A cultural acceptance of violence within a society permeates attainable conflict resolution strategies. Violence in Lebanon is rampant due to the neighboring war in Syria, divided alliances, recent assassinations and a state of unresolved transitional peace after decades of civil war. Domestic violence, therefore, does not garner significant attention yet plays a substantial part in creating culturally accepted violence. Because of the current crises, it is incumbent upon non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide services that promote peaceful resolutions in domestic violence situations.

Violence against women leaves an entire segment of the population vulnerable when examined through the prism of the Human Security paradigm. The microcosm of security of the individual is often confined to the narrative, although collectively, violence of individuals and community has commanded a more nuanced analysis. The responsibility of states to define intimate partner violence as a human rights abuse and human security issue, as defined by the 1979 Convention to Eliminate Discrimination against Women and the 1993 United Nations Declaration to Eliminate Violence against Women is required in order for this type of violence to gain peaceful resolution. The specific aims of this research are to provide an educational tool for non-governmental organizations to mitigate the effects of violence against women through peace promotion and education in lieu of state intervention.



The prevalence of gender based violence in Lebanon has been reported to be up to 35% (Usta, et al, 2007) although actual statistics are unknown due to issues of underreporting. A macro-analysis of cultural norms created through the lens of peace psychology is analyzed as a possible indicator of cultural acceptance of intimate partner violence in Lebanon. To mitigate the effects of this cultural norm on the individual, the author developed a tool for practical therapeutic use in assisting women who are victims of gender based violence through a serious game intervention which may be used as an educational tool by NGOs to promote peaceful family relations. The implementation of human security measures for women in the Middle East will require a grass-roots effort based on therapeutic support for gender based violence victims. Positive results will have wider peace building implications.



Hypothesis:

A “serious” game intervention will increase levels of self-esteem and feelings of perseverance in participants in an effort to aid in the victim’s recovery and avoid continued or future abuse. Modeling healthy family relations will promote household peace.

Screenshot of serious game: FamilyPeace©

Players are required to manipulate an avatar of a baby in the developmental stage of learning to walk. To successfully complete the game, participants must maneuver the avatar into walking mode.



Measures:

- In a study by Shahe Kazarian, seven items of the Arabic version of the Contingencies of Self-Worth scale have proved to be reliable and valid in the Lebanese community. In the same study, the Arabic version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale showed to have high internal consistency ($\alpha = .71$). (Kazarian, 2009)
- Scores will be coded and multilevel statistical models will be used to test the hypothesis that the gaming intervention will raise self-esteem levels of domestic abuse victims. All analyses will be conducted using PASW Statistics 18 (formerly known as SPSS).

Methods and Procedures:

- The Arabic version of the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale will be administered prior to the gaming intervention (T1) The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, measuring global self-esteem, will also be administered at T1 to participants at three NGOs in Beirut, Lebanon- YWCA, ABAAD and KAFA.
- Participants will be randomly chosen to play either the control game (Pacman) or the serious game intervention, FamilyPeace©.
- After the intervention, the scales will be administered again (T2) followed by a debriefing including questions such as, “Can you recall another time when you felt you achieved success?” in order to reinforce learning outcomes of the intervention.

Results:

- Although measurement tools were not permitted to be administered by any of the three participating NGOs, feelings of happiness, success and perseverance were self-reported in individuals piloting the game

Conclusions:

- Initial data collected in May 2013 in Beirut, Lebanon showed a trend towards increased feelings of accomplishment and perseverance after playing the serious game – necessary affects for situational extrication.
- Participants also showed an increase in willingness to express themselves and speak with NGO workers
- NGO social workers indicated a constructive use for family modeling and group therapy.

Future Directions:

- Men must be included in future studies to test the hypothesis that the serious game effectively models peaceful family relations
- Multiple gaming levels can be created to teach peaceful parenting.

